STARKINGS : LONDON

Mystery City

HIP FLASK®

THE BIG HERE & THE LONG NOW
EPISODE ONE OF THREE

"COMICRAFT"™ SINCE 1992

PRESENTS:

HIP FLASK®

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"THE PAST IS BUT
THE BEGINNING OF
A BEGINNING, AND
ALL THAT IS AND
HAS BEEN IS BUT
THE TWILIGHT OF
A DAWN."

H. G. WELLS,
'THE DISCOVERY
OF THE FUTURE'
1902

PROLOGUE

The atom was ripped open, DNA ruthlessly unravelled, the man of science now assumes dominion.

Nature's resources fall under his command.

Human life, expendable.

Animal life, expendable.

The man of science knows that it is his responsibility, his right, to prise open nature's shells and extract all the secrets inside.

Nothing is Sacred.

The human equation is of no consequence to him.

Those that believe the human condition to be superior to that of animals are fools.
Hatred...
Anger...

Suffering...

Fear...

Longing...

These are the base feelings of lesser creatures.

Feelings that trap them in the past.

The man of science looks to the future. The cloudy emotions of the here and now are not for him.

TIME! TIME IS PERHAPS THE MOST PRECIOUS COMMODITY OF ALL!

He lives in the Big Here and the Long Now.

He owns the future.

THEY SAY THAT MANKIND'S TRUE ENEMY IS *TIME*. MORE SPECIFICALLY, WE ARE AT ITS MERCY BECAUSE OF OUR INABILITY TO CONTROL IT.

BUT MY EXPERIMENTS WILL PROVE ONCE AND FOR ALL THAT IT IS INDEED POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE THAT CONTROL.

THE MACHINERY HERE MAY RESEMBLE A TUNNEL, BUT DO NOT BE SEDUCED BY THE IDEA THAT WE TRAVEL *THROUGH* TIME... IT IS NOT *IN FRONT* OF US, OR *BEHIND* US...

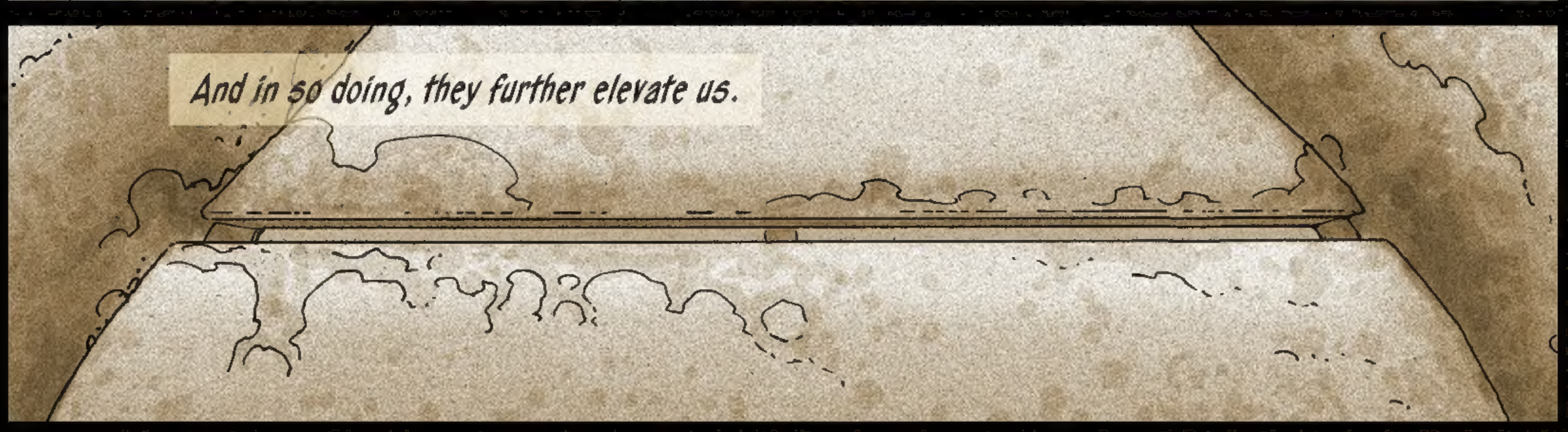
NO, TO TRULY UNDERSTAND TIME, WE MUST ABANDON SUCH *LINEAR* CONCEPTS, AND ACCEPT THAT TIME IS SIMPLY A SHIFTING, KALEIDOSCOPIC PATTERN... ONE THAT ENVELOPS AND SURROUNDS US ALL.

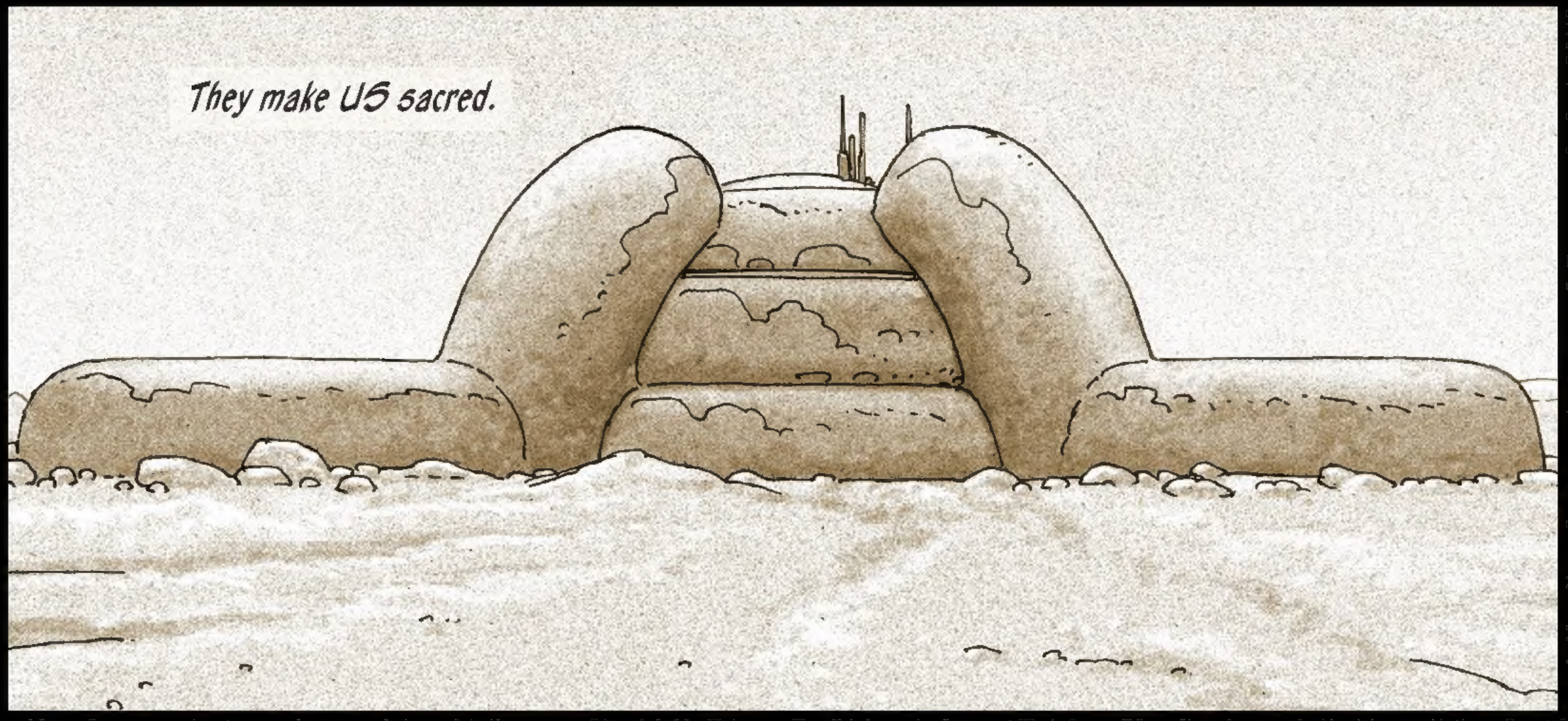
Nothing is sacred.

Weaker men fear us.

They send us away.

Lock us up.


And in so doing, they further elevate us.


They make US sacred.

THE MOJAVE DESERT, CALIFORNIA, 2262

TANCE: 15.599m

RANGE: 9312

BREAKFAST IS SERVED!

MISTER *SCLATER.* HOW ARE YOU THIS MORNING?

VERY WELL, THANK YOU, SIR.

PLEASE, SIT DOWN, *EAT.*

AH, YES. EGGS.

MY FAVORITE.

IT REALLY IS A REMARKABLY BEAUTIFUL MORNING ISN'T IT?

IT'S A REMARKABLE *LOCATION*, SCLATER.

NEVERTHELESS, HAVING STUDIED THE LANDSCAPE HERE FOR NEARLY *EIGHTEEN* YEARS, I AM REALLY RATHER TIRED OF IT.

OF COURSE, I'LL BE GETTING *OUT* OF HERE QUITE SOON, SO I DARE SAY I SHOULD ENJOY THE VIEW WHILE I CAN.

GETTING OUT OF HERE... ARE YOU QUITE *MAD...?*

IF YOU ARE TO BELIEVE THE JUDGMENT PASSED ON ME IN GENEVA, THEN, YES... I BELIEVE THAT IT WAS DECIDED THAT I WAS, IN FACT, A MADMAN.

BUT YOU AND I BOTH KNOW THAT THE LINE BETWEEN *INSANITY* AND *GENIUS* IS A VERY FINE ONE...

YOU AND I BOTH KNOW THAT THERE ARE CORPORATIONS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD WHO WOULD PAY *MILLIONS* JUST TO HAVE THEIR HEAD SCIENTISTS SPEND FIFTEEN *MINUTES* WITH ME.

AND THERE ARE OTHERS WHO WOULD SPEND MILLIONS TO SEE ME *DEAD.*

WHICH IS IT, SCLATER?

WHO'S PAYING YOU?

YOU ARE *MISTAKEN,* DOCTOR NIKKEN.

I THINK YOU'LL FIND THAT YOU WILL BE LOCKED UP HERE FOR A GREAT MANY MORE YEARS TO COME.

SLADE, I THINK THE PRISONER HAS SEEN *ENOUGH* DAYLIGHT.

RETURN HIM TO HIS CELL, I WILL ASSIGN TWO MORE GUARDS IMMEDIATELY.

YES, DOUBLE THE GUARDS.

I'M A VERY DANGEROUS MAN.

...AND IF YOU WERE **WATCHING** THE LIVE COVERAGE OF THE BAVERSTOCK EXPERIMENT LAST NIGHT, YOU'LL KNOW THAT THINGS DID **NOT** GO EXACTLY AS PLANNED...

WELL, FAR BE IT FROM ME TO SAY "I TOLD YOU SO," RABBI... BUT HEY -- I **TOLD** YOU SO!

ANYWAY, WHAT'S THE STORY? DO WE KNOW WHO WAS **DRIVING** THE CAR YET? HEY, MAYBE IT'S A VISITOR FROM THE YEAR TWENTY-FIVE, TWENTY-FIVE!

GO AHEAD AND JOKE ABOUT IT, HERMAN, THAT CAR APPEARED OUT OF THIN AIR AND WE **ARE** TALKING ABOUT A **TIME TRAVEL** EXPERIMENT!

RABBI, COME ON! I **SAW** THE CAR -- IT WAS A **PINTO** FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! ARE YOU TELLING ME THEY'LL STILL BE **MAKING** THAT MODEL THREE HUNDRED YEARS FROM NOW?!

TRUST ME, MY FRIEND, THIS IS ALL JUST A BIG **SET UP** -- A PLAY TO GET MORE MONEY SO THEY CAN KEEP THAT BIG **SNO-CONE** OF A BUILDING OPERATIONAL FOR ANOTHER COUPLE OF YEARS...

...I BETCHA THEY'RE GONNA GET **BAGS** OF CASH AFTER THIS LITTLE DISPLAY, AND IF I WAS THE OWNER OF THE MARLOWE BUILDING I'D BE CALLING MY LAWYERS IN TO **SUE** THE FOUNDATION FOR THAT CAR-SIZED HOLE IN THE SIDE OF THE TOWER THERE.

EVER THE COLD-HEARTED CYNIC, HERMAN... YOU'RE LISTENING TO **THE HERMAN STRUM SHOW**, STREAMING 24/7 FROM DOWNTOWN **L.A.**, WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK...

FLYING CARS -- I ASK YOU -- WHO CAME UP WITH *THAT* BRIGHT IDEA...?

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

JUST *BEGGING* FOR TROUBLE...

HIP, C-CAN I PLEASE BORROW YOUR COAT...? IT'S *FREEZING* UP HERE!

I CAN ASSURE YOU, LIEUTENANT TRENCH, IF I *KNEW* WHERE THAT CAR CAME FROM, I'D *TELL* YOU... *THE BAVERSTOCK PROJECT* IS AN EXPERIMENT TO TEST MY THEORY OF THE NON-LINEAR STRUCTURE OF TIME AND...

AND A MAN IS *DEAD*, DOCTOR WHITAKER. A MAN WHOSE DNA IS *NOT* ON *RECORD*.

OH, MUD OF MERCY...

LAMBERT AND I CAN'T *POSSIBLY* BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR HIS DEATH, LIEUTENANT... THIS IS *CLEARLY* SOME KIND OF FREAKISH *ACCIDENT*...

I'LL HOLD YOU *AND* YOUR DAUGHTER ACCOUNTABLE FOR *WHATEVER* I LIKE, DOCTOR.

HOLOFONE OFF.

THE BIG HERE & THE LONG NOW

EPISODE ONE

Mystery City

WELL, I'LL TELL YA SOMETHING FOR *NOTHING*, TRENCH...

THE CAR'S DRIVER WASN'T KILLED IN THE CRASH...

HE WAS *CRUSHED* BY SOMETHING *MUCH* MORE DEADLY.

FLASK, THIS IS POLICE BUSINESS. I DON'T NEED TO KNOW WHAT YOU *THINK* HAPPENED HERE.

THE ONLY REASON WE CALLED THE INFORMATION AGENCY IN IS BECAUSE WE NEED YOU TO TRACK DOWN THE *OWNER* OF THE VEHICLE.

AND HERE'S ME THINKING YOU WANTED TO TALK OVER OLD TIMES...

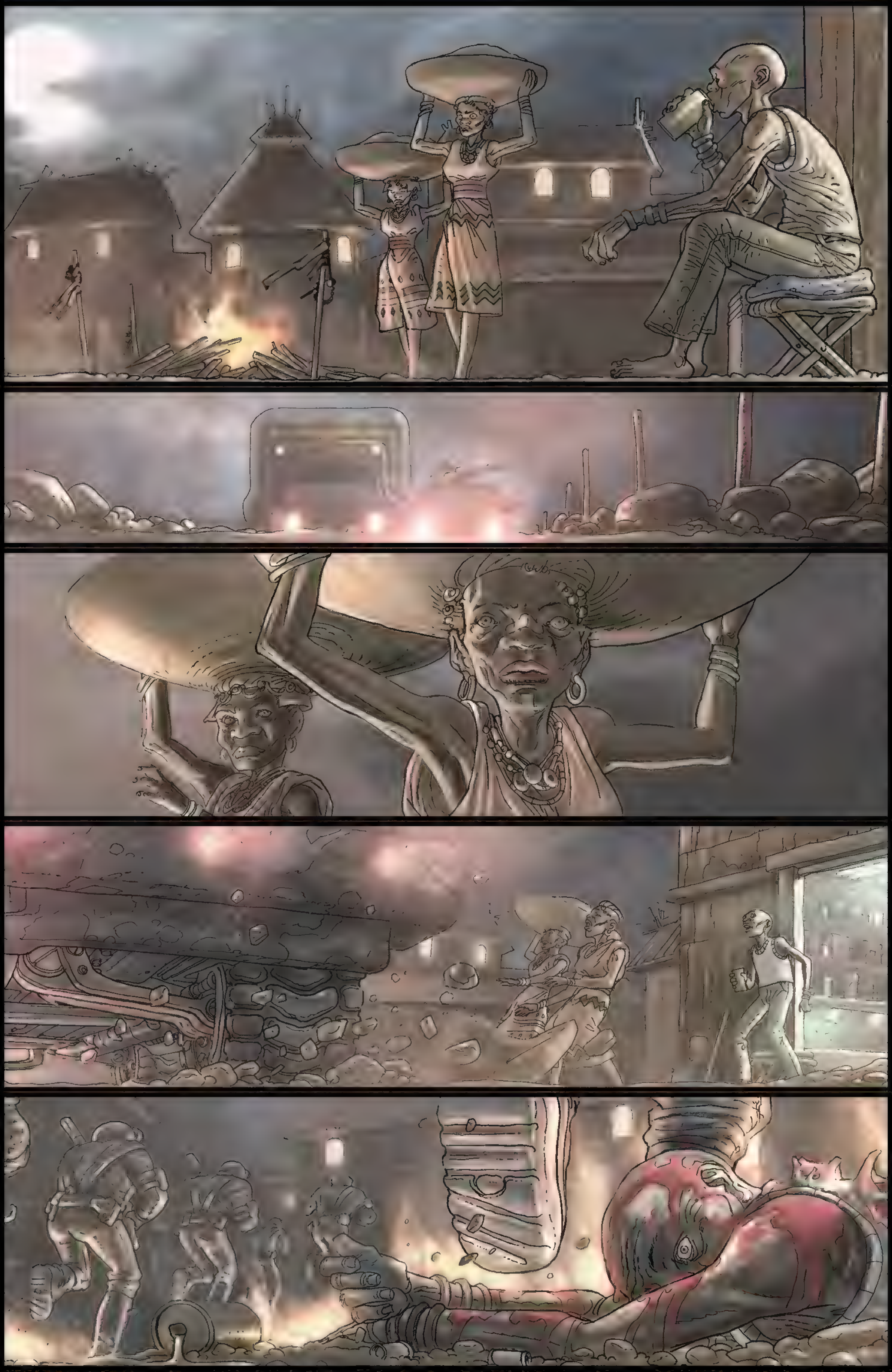
IF YOU WERE SMART, YOU'D HAVE *FORGOTTEN* THE OLD TIMES... AND YOU WOULDN'T BE DOING *GRUNT* WORK FOR THE AGENCY.

GUYS, GUYS, YOU'RE ON THE SAME SIDE... YOU'RE TWO OF A KIND--

"TWO OF A *KIND?*"

YOU MEAN *AFRICAN-AMERICANS? IMMIGRANTS?* SORRY-- *ELEPHANTMEN?*

MISS CASE, PERHAPS YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED... NEITHER ONE OF US LOOK LIKE *ELEPHANTS.*



MAMA...?

SAHARA!

MAMA!

MAMA--

OH!

OBADIAH--?

MY LOVE--?

THIS DOES NOT SOUND LIKE GOOD NEWS, MISTER PURCHASE.

I HOPE, FOR YOUR SAKE, THAT THIS INTERRUPTION OF MY SCHEDULE IS NOT WITHOUT JUST CAUSE.

I AM QUITE CERTAIN, MISTER HORN, THAT THIS IS SOMETHING YOU WILL WANT TO... *LOOK INTO* YOURSELF.

SAHARA... I AM *SORRY*, MY DEAR...

THERE IS SOME BUSINESS I MUST TO ATTEND TO, URGENTLY.

SLEEP SOME MORE...

OBADIAH, PLEASE, STAY *HERE* TODAY.

YOU'RE DISTURBED. I... I CAN'T SLEEP.

I'M AFRAID FOR YOU...

SAHARA... MY DARLING... *LOOK* AT ME...

WHAT IS THERE IN THIS WORLD THAT I MIGHT BE AFRAID OF....?

LONG BEACH SEAPORT

WHO DID THIS?

WHO?

WHY DO I ASK?

THIS BUTCHERY CARRIES ONE SIGNATURE.

IMMEDIATE RETALIATION.

SWIFT AND BRUTAL.

MY PLEASURE.

VENICE BEACH

WELL, NOW, HERE'S A FUNNY THING...

GET THIS, I'M READING *TWO* SIGNATURES OF THE VEHICLE I.D...

ONE WHERE YOU GUYS JUST LEFT IT ON THE TOP FLOOR OF THE MARLOWE BUILDING...

...AND ONE EXACTLY HALF A MILE *ABOVE* IT.

OOOOOHH... "MYSTERY CITY!"

GOOD JOB, EBONY...

VANITY, I HOPE YOU'RE *HUNGRY.*

I THINK IT'S HIGH TIME I TOOK YOU TO LUNCH AT *THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE...*

THE DOCKS · LONG BEACH

IMPORTS

GOOD MORNING...

...I WONDER -- CAN YOU HELP ME?

I'M LOOKING FOR SOMETHING IN *RED.*

NO, NO, NO...

I WAS THINKING OF SOMETHING *MUCH* DARKER.

WOOOOO-HOOOOO!

HEY, AREN'T YOU GUYS *ENJOYING* THE RIDE BACK THERE?

I'M JUST GLAD I HAVEN'T *EATEN* ANYTHING YET...

UM... DOES YOUR LICENSE PLATE REALLY SAY "HIP LOVER?"

OF COURSE! WHAT'S *NOT* TO LOVE ABOUT HIP? LOTS TO *GRAB*, LOTS TO *LOVE!*

BUT I'M GLAD YOU'VE *REMINDED* ME.... I HAVE TO CHANGE THE PLATE...

MOST PEOPLE THINK IT MEANS "HI, PULL OVER!"

SMEK

TAKE YOUR TIME, GUYS! GOTTA USE THE LADIES'!

HIERONYMOUS...

TO WHAT DO I OWE THIS UNEXPECTED *PLEASURE?*

THIS IS NOT A SOCIAL CALL, JOE.

SEEMS LIKE YOU'VE GOT A CAR IN YOUR LOT... ONE THAT'S HAS NO ***RIGHT*** TO BE HERE... OR NO RIGHT TO BE SOMEWHERE ***ELSE.***

ITS I.D. MATCHES THIS ONE.

WE'RE TRYING TO FIND OUT WHO IT BELONGS TO.

I'LL BE ONLY TOO GLAD TO HELP...

CARLOS, TAKE MY FRIEND HERE DOWN TO THE PARKING AREA.

YOU GUYS DON'T CHIT-CHAT MUCH, DO YOU?

OF COURSE NOT.

IF WE WANT TO REMINISCE, WE JUST LOOK IN THE MIRROR.

NOW, WE ARE AT WAR.

I'M BRINGING IN THE SILENCER.

HEY, MAYBE THE REGISTRATION CARD IS IN A *DIFFERENT* CAR!

MAYBE THERE WAS A GLITCH, MAYBE WE'RE GETTING A *DUMMY* SIGNAL...

YEAH, AND *MAYBE* CASBAH JOE *ISN'T* HIDING SOMETHING...

HIP, GIVE HIM A *CHANCE*. YOU DON'T HAVE TO TREAT ALL THE OTHER SURVIVORS WITH SO MUCH MISTRUST AND SUSPICION... YOU TRUST *EBONY*, RIGHT?

EBONY AND I HAVE *ALWAYS* WATCHED EACH OTHER'S BACKS, VANITY...

"JOE TENDS TO MIX WITH THE WRONG SORTS."

HMM... THAT'S INTERESTING... THE SIGNAL'S GETTING WEAKER...

FUNNY -- I DON'T SEE ANY CARS LEAVING.

FIRE HER UP, MIKI... THIS IS STARTING TO LOOK LIKE IT'S GONNA TAKE ALL DAY...

THOSE TWO WERE ON MY TAIL EARLIER.

IS THE MONKEY A FRIEND OF YOURS?

NO. BUT LEAVE HIM BE.

SERENGHETI HAS A TARGET FOR YOU.

PLEASE, LIEUTENANT TRENCH, MAY WE *LEAVE* NOW? WE'VE BEEN HERE THE WHOLE AFTERNOON.

MY FATHER AND I HAVE NOT *SLEPT* FOR MORE THAN THIRTY-SIX *HOURS.*

I THINK PERHAPS YOU'VE TOLD ME EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW, *FOR NOW.*

BUT I ADVISE YOU NOT TO LEAVE THE AREA. I MAY NEED TO QUESTION YOU STILL FURTHER.

OF COURSE WE WON'T LEAVE THE AREA!

FOR GOD'S SAKE, MAN, WE'RE SCIENTISTS NOT CRIMINALS!

YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO CONVINCE THE AMERICAN PUBLIC THAT A MAN CAN TRAVEL THROUGH TIME, DOCTOR WHITAKER...

BUT YOU CAN'T CONVINCE *ME* THAT SCIENTISTS *AREN'T* CRIMINALS.

DON'T LEAVE THE AREA.

ONE LAST QUESTION, MISS LAMBERT.

I KNOW THAT THE BAVERSTOCK FOUNDATION FINANCES YOUR WORK...

...BUT WHO FINANCES THE FOUNDATION?

THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE OF WEALTH WHO BELIEVE IN SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS, LIEUTENANT. I SUGGEST YOU LOOK THEM UP IN *WHO'S WHO.*

OH, YEAH...

..."PROGRESS."

SERENGHETI MAY BE RASH BUT WE CANNOT AFFORD TO TAKE HIM FOR A FOOL.

HE HAS SUFFERED LOSSES, BUT HE *WILL* STRIKE AGAIN.

I WANT GUARDS ROUND THE CLOCK IN DOUBLE SHIFTS AT ALL OF OUR LOCATIONS, AT THE PARK AND AROUND THE Ddocks.

THIS MORNING'S SECURITY FAILURE MUST *NOT* BE REPEATED.

THE CITY IS GETTING AT YOU AGAIN, OBADIAH...

SUCH ARE THE WAYS OF MAN. THEY ADMIRE SUCCESS BUT AT THE SAME TIME HOPE TO SNATCH ITS FRUIT FROM YOUR HANDS.

SAHARA, *SERENGHETI* IS NOT A MAN. HE IS AN *ANIMAL.*

HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE THAT THE... *ATTACK* THIS MORNING CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO SERENGHETI?

YOU KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT AS WELL AS I DO, MY DEAR...

BECAUSE I MARRIED HIS DAUGHTER.

KTLA
All the News All the Time
EARLIER TODAY, SCIENTISTS AND POLICE AGENTS WERE BAFFLED BY THE APPEARANCE OF AN AIRCAR IN THE MIDST OF THE FIRST BAVERSTOCK TIME TRAVEL EXPERIMENT.
THE VEHICLE AND DRIVER, WHO WAS REPORTED DECEASED, CAME TO REST IN THE NEARBY MARLOWE BUILDING. THE CAR HAS YET TO BE TRACED TO ITS OWNER.
COULD THIS BE A VISITOR FROM THE FUTURE...? WATCH K-T-L-A'S COVERAGE AND DECIDE FOR YOURSELF.
TIME! TIME IS PERHAPS THE MOST PRECIOUS COMMODITY OF ALL!
OBADIAH... IF YOU COULD TRAVEL BACK IN TIME, WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE...?
CHANGE--? I--
THEY SAY THAT MANKIND'S TRUE ENEMY IS TIME.
MORE SPECIFICALLY, WE ARE AT IT'S MERCY BECAUSE OF OUR INABILITY TO CONTROL IT...
I'D CHANGE NOTHING, MY LOVE.
I'D CHOOSE ALWAYS TO BE HERE... WITH YOU.
DV 2309
WELL, ISN'T THAT SWEET...

TO TRULY UNDERSTAND TIME, WE MUST ABANDON SUCH LINEAR CONCEPTS...

AND I WOULD CHOOSE--

...AND ACCEPT THAT TIME IS SIMPLY A SHIFTING KALEIDOSCOPIC PATTERN... ONE THAT ENVELOPS AND SURROUNDS US ALL...

AHAB

YES, WHITAKER DID SAY THAT TIME IS MAN'S GREATEST ENEMY...

SAHARA--?

BUT I WONDER WHAT HE'D CHANGE IF HE COULD GO BACK IN TIME AFTER TODAY'S EVENTS...

YEAH, *THIS* IS WHY I JOINED THE INFORMATION AGENCY, HIP...

SO I COULD SPEND HOURS LOOKING FOR A CAR WHICH PROBABLY DOESN'T *EXIST* ANYWAY...

Y'KNOW, THAT'S PROBABLY THE MISTAKE WE'VE BEEN MAKING...

I'VE BEEN ASSUMING THAT THE SIGNAL WE'VE TRACED HERE IS COMING FROM A *CAR*...

BUT ACTUALLY IT'S BEING GENERATED BY ONE OF *THESE*--

OH -- *DUH!*

SO IT ISN'T NECESSARILY INSIDE A CAR!

BINGO.

OKAAAY... SO... HMMM... WELL, NOW I HAVE UH... *TWO* OF THEM..

GREAT-- SO WE'RE RIGHT BACK WHERE WE *STARTED*...

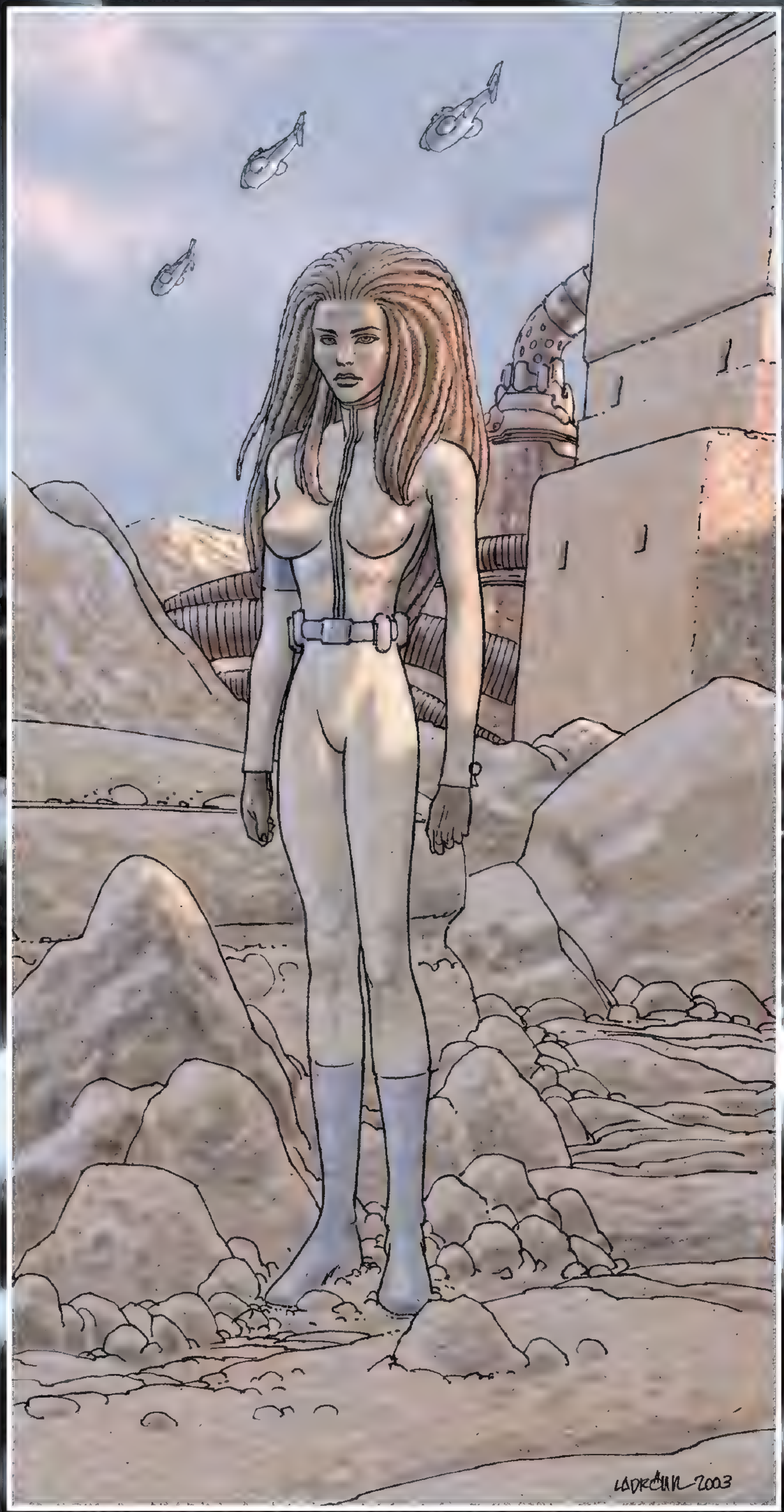
HIP...

WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE GOOD MUD--?!

NEXT:

OUROBOROUS

2006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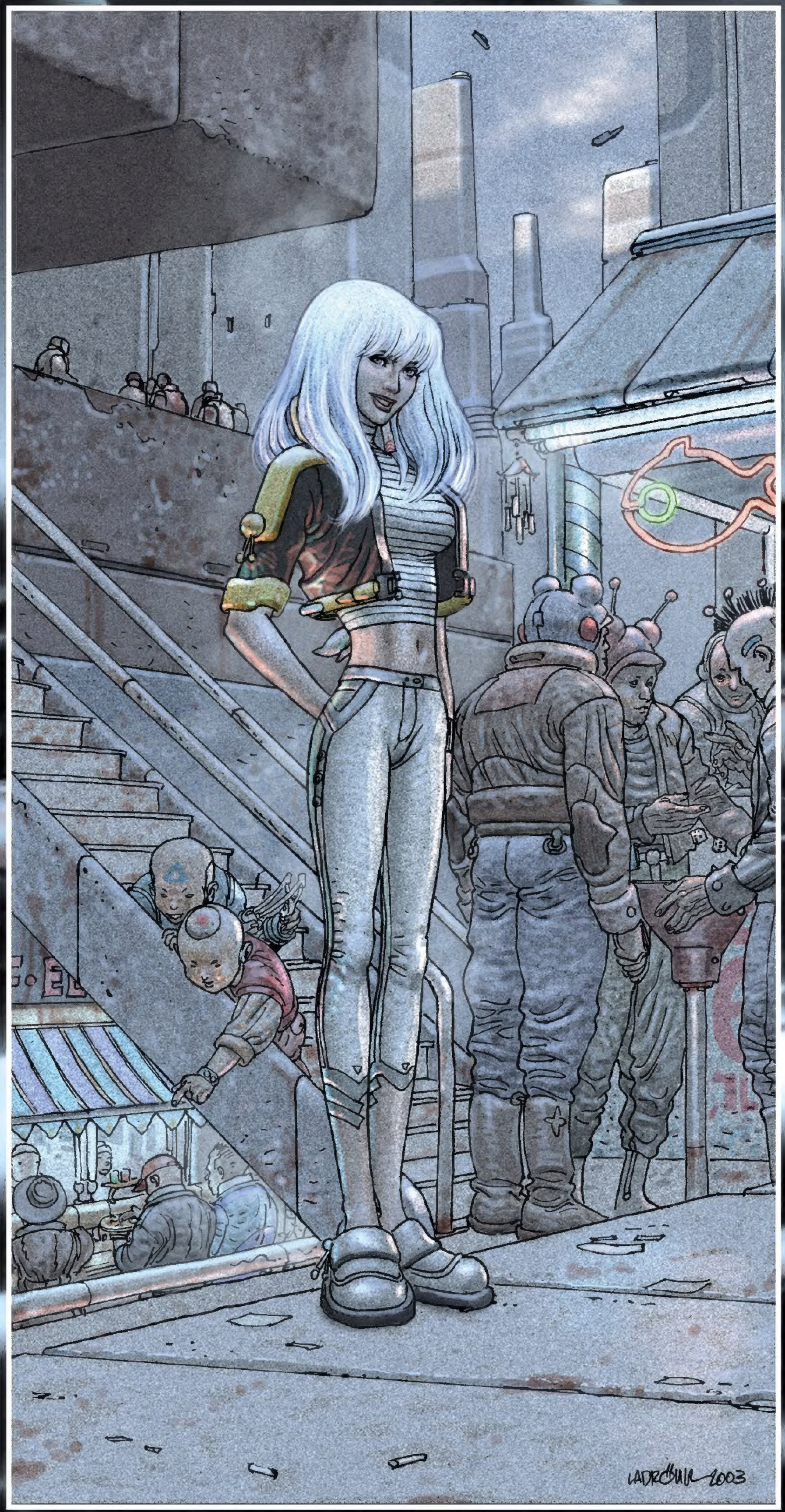
PURVEYORS OF "COMICRAFT" SINCE 1992 UNIQUE DESIGN AND FINE LETTERING

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATES THIS ISSUE TO:
ALAN MOORE, STEVE MOORE, STEVE DILLON,
DAVID LLOYD AND STEVE PARKHOUSE.

POST YOUR COMMENTS @ WWW.HIPFLASK.COM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EXTRA SPECIAL THANKS TO: YUYI & YOUSHKA

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